



State of Arizona
Department of Education

Tom Horne
Superintendent of
Public Instruction

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Sponsors of the National School Lunch Program

FROM: Mary Szafranski, Deputy Associate Superintendent
Arizona Department of Education, Health and Nutrition Services

Lee Renda, NSLP Nutrition Director
Lynn Ladd, NSLP Health Director
National School Lunch Program

DATE: June 30, 2008

SUBJECT: Automatic Eligibility for Free Meal Benefits Extended to All Children Enrolled in Head Start

This memorandum provides guidance regarding amendments to the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (NSLA) that extends automatic eligibility for free meal benefits to all children enrolled in Head Start and participating in child nutrition programs, such as the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the Child and Adult Care Food Program.

On December 12, 2007, the President signed The Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 (Public Law 110-134) which contains several significant revisions to the Head Start Program, including amendments to the eligibility criteria in section 645 of the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9840). Public Law 110-134 also amends section 9(b)(12)(A)(iii) and 17(c)(5) of the NSLA to correspond with the eligibility criteria in regards to child nutrition programs.

All reimbursable meals served to children enrolled in Head Start and who participates in the NSLP may now be claimed at the free rate. Children who are enrolled in Head Start and who participates in NSLP are primarily from families with household incomes at or below the Federal poverty level. However, a small proportion of children from families with household incomes above the poverty level may also be enrolled in Head Start. In the past, only those

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children who were income eligible for Head Start were considered automatically eligible for free meals in the NSLP.

Public Law 110-134 makes **any** child enrolled in Head Start automatically eligible for free meals without further application or eligibility determination. **Therefore, even a child who is not from a household with an income at or below the poverty level is automatically eligible for free meals under the NSLA and Child Nutrition Act if they are enrolled in Head Start.**

The Local Education Agency (LEA) may now establish automatic eligibility of all Head Start enrollees for free meals through documentation provided by Head Start programs. For example: a list of children enrolled in Head Start and participating in NSLP, that is signed and dated by the Head Start Director, would serve as appropriate documentation.

Please note:

Free eligibility in the NSLP is only extended to children who are enrolled in Head Start. Head Start can not make the entire family/household eligible for free meals as was done in the past. For this reason, siblings of enrolled Head Start children can no longer be automatically eligible/claimed for free meals in the NSLP. However, siblings of Head Start enrolled children are eligible to be claimed for meals in the NSLP by the LEA if they have an approved income application for the siblings.

All such reimbursable meals served December 12, 2007 and beyond may be claimed.

LEA may submit revised claims in order to claim all reimbursable meals served to Head Start enrollees that were not previously claimed at the free rate.

In order to retroactively claim meals at the free rate, LEAs must refund any money they received for reduced or paid meals to the families of Head Start children who were not previously eligible for free meals. The attached spreadsheets and original signature total page must be completed, signed and sent in to ADE, Health and Nutrition, Attn: Michelle Roberts, 1535 W. Jefferson Street, Bin #7, Phoenix, AZ 85007 to be able to submit a revised claim.

Please have all the required paperwork and revised claims to the Arizona Department of Education, Health and Nutrition Finance Department no later than December 26, 2008.

For questions regarding Head Start eligibility status, please contact your School Health and Nutrition Specialist. For questions regarding retroactively claimed meals, please contact Lee Renda at 602-542-8705.

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